

Event Planning Tips

Create an advisory committee: Rounding up leaders in your community who understand your organization's goals will not only help spread the word about the event, but will also provide a good sounding board for ideas. Leaders can also give input on the needs and resources in your community, as well as give a new perspective.

Choose individuals who can provide credibility, expertise, endorsement, or contacts and who will be committed to help. Representatives of your audience can also be good advisory committee members. The committee can meet as often as you need. With today's technology, there are more options available to make coordinating busy schedules easier. Conference calls and email can be extremely effective tools for receiving feedback. We suggest at least one face-to-face meeting as a group, so that people can network and get to know each other.

Develop partnerships in the community: A community working together will have more impact in spreading the Public Health brand. Be sure to choose partners that have the same goals as your organization and are committed to the public health issues. Think outside the box when you are brainstorming potential partners. Of course there will be obvious partners like schools, clinics and hospitals, but consider non-traditional partners like fire departments, churches and retail chains that cater to families/children or general good health.

Link the event day to a national or state recognition day: These relationships give your organization greater leverage with the media and members of your community. Public Health Week is a great time to plan an event that will spread the Public Health brand and heighten awareness of your organization in the community. Many different organizations across Washington State working together to promote public health in their communities during Public Health Week increases media interest in all events, and strengthens everyone's efforts.

Public Health Week is not the only time you can create an event to spread the Public Health brand. You can create events that tie to other national events, or create events that are not connected to any sort of national event, but have timeliness for your community. For example, a back-to-school immunization drive will have greater impact if you can also say that it is in support of National Immunization Month in August; but a community-wide West Nile Virus cleanup, or an educational event on food handling at the start of BBQ season, can be just as effective.

Location! Location! Location! Choose venues that already have high traffic from members of the target audience you are trying to reach and tie to the theme of your event. Think schools or playgrounds for promoting immunizations; grocery store or farmers market if your event is promoting healthy eating. That way you will already have a captive audience. Be sure the location is easy to access, has adequate parking and restrooms, and space to set up an exhibit or accommodate your event's activities.

Develop goals and objectives: It is easy to get caught up with the details and planning of an event and forget why you are doing it. One of your first tasks should be writing goals and objectives. Think about why you are doing the event and what you want to accomplish by hosting it. Make sure your objectives are realistic. Consider the budget and time that will go into planning and implementing an event. Is it the right activity to reach your audiences and accomplish organizational goals?

Sample:

- **Goal:** Increase awareness on how public health is protecting the community's drinking water.
- **Objective:** Have 100 people come to water quality workshop at the health department.
- **Objective:** Have 2 media outlets cover the event.

Conduct best practice research: This is a step that is often skipped, but spending a couple hours on the Internet or calling another organization to ask about what they learned from planning their event will help you get ideas and activities, potential partners and determine what has been the most successful in other communities. There is a vast network involved in promoting the Public Health brand in Washington that you can talk to about past events they have done and get ideas on how to best execute your event. Call any member of the PHIP Communications Committee and they can point you to resources and other organizations to talk to. A list of the PHIP Communications Committee members and their contact information is available in Appendix A of this packet.

Involve the media: Public health issues are community issues. The media should be aware of your organization's activities to keep the community healthy. That doesn't mean that the media will always cover your event. Nor does it suggest that an event should be planned only to attract media attention. It is the job of local media to inform the general public on issues and events that affect them, so

your event needs to be for the community in order to be credible and draw positive media attention. See tips on working with the media in this packet.

Make sure your display and materials are inviting: In order to make an impact your event needs to be visually stimulating. It is human nature to be attracted to what captures our attention. A well-organized display with inviting materials will attract audience members, opening a line of communication with them. Have a plan once audience members have approached the booth. What do you want them to do? Get information? Ask questions? It pays to be prepared. There are many different types of tools on the PHIP website that you can customize and use with your event including brochures, give-aways, photos, PowerPoint templates, etc. Go to <http://ww2.doh.wa.gov/hip/> for more information on available tools.

Evaluate the event: Determining the event's success will help decide whether to do more events in the future and track the results of your efforts. Think about measuring your event's success ahead of time. Assign someone to count attendance or ask participants for feedback. See evaluation tips in this packet.